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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Oh, Lord, our God, sometimes life's issues seem too much for us. Forgive us when we speak words of despair, forgetting Your promise that You will never leave or forsake us.

Lord, speak to the faith of our lawmakers, causing them also to remember Your promise that, in everything, You are working for the good of those who love You.

Give us all the wisdom to know that You are, indeed, our refuge and strength. Answer us, mighty God, at a time You choose. Answer our prayers because of Your great love. Send us forth to serve You by embracing justice, loving mercy, and walking with humility.

We pray in Your compassionate Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, we had interesting news in Vermont this morning. Our Governor, Governor Scott, announced that we have reached 80 percent immunity—vaccinations—and so the State will, in effect, reopen.

Now, I mention this because, right from the beginning, I have worked closely with our Governor. We have tried to show no partisanship in this. I am a Democrat; he is a Republican. We are both, first and foremost, Vermonters.

And restrictions were put in place. Efforts were made to vaccinate. I know my wife Marcelle and I went to some of these vaccination centers. We had everybody from Vermont National Guard to veterans groups, to schools, to nurses who were volunteering all over those places.

And everybody would line up, and they would say: "I am scheduled for 9:20. I will be there at 9:10," and they just went through, and people wanted to get the vaccination.

It meant some hardships while it was going on because a lot of our businesses could not open or had to open just in limited ways.

But—but they kept at it, and we all worked together to help with aid to the State during the COVID time, and I was proud of what I might be able to do, but I am mostly proud of the

Vermonters. They set politics aside; they set partisanship aside; and they said: How would it make us a safer State?

So I just thought I would note that, all my trips back home, all the times I joined with the various people—Dr. Levine, our chief physician in Vermont, and the Governor and others, our Lieutenant Governor, Molly Gray—all of us worked together, and it has paid off.

And I must admit, when I go home this weekend, this coming weekend, I am going to walk off that plane with a bigger smile than I usually have.

I always have a smile coming home to the State where I was born, but this weekend it is going to be an especially big smile.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, tonight, congressional leaders will mark what is hopefully the final somber milestone of the COVID pandemic: 600,000 American lives lost to the disease. It is particularly jarring at this moment—a moment of recovery, optimism, and hope—to remember the enormity of lives lost over the past 15 months. Not only that, we face the grim reality that the recent fatalities happened while Americans were on the verge of getting vaccinated. Some had their appointment just days away.

So as our fellow Americans are taking their masks off, going back to work, seeing families and friends, and returning, as they should, to life, let us remember those who cannot. Let us hold them in our hearts a little while longer.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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